



Waking America to the Importance of Sleep



NATIONAL SLEEP
FOUNDATION

May 20, 2003

Dear Representative:

On April 2, U.S. Representative Zoe Lofgren introduced House Concurrent Resolution 135 advocating an 8:30 a.m. or later start time for secondary schools. This resolution, entitled the "ZZZ's to A's," would promote student academic performance, health and safety, as well as address after-school violent juvenile crime. The National Sleep Foundation; the nation's leading organization dedicated to improving public health and safety by increasing understanding of issues related to sleep, fatigue, and sleep disorders, supports this resolution.

Currently, many teenagers are attending classes and participating in after-school functions while they are chronically sleep-deprived. This pervasive sleepiness is affecting their health, safety, productivity, and learning abilities. Research shows that older adolescents require about nine hours of sleep a night in order to maintain proper alertness during the day. Sleep specialists indicate that during puberty, a shift in the biological clock occurs, making it difficult for teenagers to get to sleep before 10 p.m. In fact, studies indicate that the average high school student does not go to bed until midnight. With most secondary schools in the U.S. opening between 7:30-8:30 a.m., students acquire a chronic sleep debt and frequently fall asleep during their morning classes or while performing other duties, such as driving an automobile or farm machinery.

Many school districts across the nation are asking if students and taxpayers are being best served by early school start times. In response to these concerns, Congresswoman Lofgren introduced H.C. Res. 135 to help encourage changes at the local level. This measure would promote the following:

- **Increased academic performance.** Students would be in school when they are most alert, learning more effectively and performing better in extra-curricular activities, such as athletics.
- **Decreased risk of fall-asleep automobile crashes.** According to National Sleep Foundation national polls, 51% of American's say that they drove drowsy at least once last year. Young people are the largest at-risk group for these devastating crashes.
- **Decreased crime.** Studies based on Federal Bureau of Investigation reports show that violent juvenile crime triples after school, particularly between the hours of 3-4 p.m. By delaying the time at which school lets out, the period during which teenagers are left without parental supervision is decreased as well.

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THE NATIONAL SLEEP FOUNDATION IS AN INDEPENDENT NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO IMPROVING PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY BY ACHIEVING UNDERSTANDING OF SLEEP AND SLEEP DISORDERS; AND BY SUPPORTING EDUCATION, SLEEP-RELATED RESEARCH, AND ADVOCACY.



Since the National Sleep Foundation released its report, *Adolescent Sleep Needs and Patterns: Research Report and Resource Guide* in 2000, we have been tracking the progress of hundreds of local school districts around the nation that have expressed interest in addressing the issues surrounding the chronic sleep deprivation of our nation's youth. Educators, parents, students, and taxpayers deserve to receive the benefits of 20 years of federally supported research in order to make appropriate choices in their communities to ensure the health, safety and academic achievement of young Americans.

I hope you will support H.C. Res. 135 to encourage school districts across the nation to address these important issues. If you would like further information on how chronic sleep deprivation is affecting young people in your district, visit our website at <http://www.sleepfoundation.org/publications/teensleep.html> or contact me at (202) 347-3471, ext. 202 or ddrobnich@sleepfoundation.org. Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Darrel Drobnich". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Darrel" and last name "Drobnich" clearly distinguishable.

Darrel Drobnich
Senior Director, Government Affairs